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Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey

Employer support of volunteering: Underlying characteristics of participation and presence of support measures

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- . not available for any reference period
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- ... not applicable
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- 0^a value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^p preliminary
- ^r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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Employer support of volunteering: Underlying characteristics of participation and presence of support measures

For thousands of non-profit organizations and charities, volunteering is essential for accomplishing a wide range of collective missions that benefit communities. Many Canadians contribute based on their means, motivations and aims, all of which can differ. Citizens are indisputably the key actors in volunteering, but businesses can also play a supporting role through various workplace contributions and initiatives, in particular employer support of volunteering (ESV).

Employers encourage employees to participate in volunteer activities and reduce barriers to volunteering by offering specific support mechanisms, such as permission to use facilities or equipment, paid time off, modified work schedules, and recognition for volunteering. The benefits of such measures are numerous and are advantageous for many, ranging from improved corporate image, employee well-being, loyalty, productivity, and local and community impacts (Peterson 2004).

For the first time, the 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (GSS GVP) permits the calculation of volunteering rates of employees with or without employer support. This was impossible in previous surveys because the questions on employer support were asked only of volunteers. Consequently, it was not known whether or not employees, who did not volunteer, had support from their employers to volunteer.

To what extent is ESV associated with an increase in employee participation in volunteer activities? Are types of employer support of volunteering predominant in certain industries? Using data from the 2013 GSS GVP, this fact sheet attempts to answer these questions by looking at the employed population aged 20 to 64 years.

What you need to know about this study

This study is based on data from the 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (GSS GVP), which was conducted on a sample of 14,714 respondents. The sample comprises individuals aged 15 and over living in Canada's 10 provinces, excluding people living full-time in institutions. It covered Canadians who, in 2013, reported having worked for pay (excluding self-employed workers) in the 12 months preceding the survey. More specifically, the analysis is restricted to respondents aged 20 to 64 years who had paid employment and who answered the questions in the employer support module. They represented 48% of all respondents.

The data from the 2010 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating¹ indicated that, for volunteers, some types of employer support were associated with more volunteering hours or that certain types of support were more prevalent in specific industries. However, it was impossible to expand the analysis to the non-volunteer population since only the volunteer cohort was asked the survey questions on employer support. In 2013, both populations were asked these questions.

Employer support of volunteering (ESV): Support of volunteering was identified by respondents who answered "yes" to any of the following questions: Please tell me about any formal support provided by your employer in the past 12 months. Did your employer give you: 1) use of facilities or equipment for your volunteer activities? 2) paid time off or time to spend volunteering while on the job? 3) approval to change work hours or reduce work activities to volunteer? 4) recognition or a letter of thanks for your volunteer activities? 5) donated prizes, gift certificates, food, etc.? 6) donated t-shirts, company goods, etc.? 7) donated financially to the organization; 8) provided transportation; 9) sponsored an event, paid entry fee, membership fee, etc.; 10) other.

1. Hurst, Matt. 2012. "Employer support of volunteering." *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

Participation in volunteer activities is greater when employees receive support from their employer

Past studies have shown that employees who volunteered and received support from their employer dedicated more hours to volunteering than those who did volunteer activities and received no such support (Hurst 2012).

Data from the 2013 GSS GVP can be used to expand on and support these conclusions, as analysis can be extended to non-volunteers. Of all employees aged 20 to 64 years, those who received support from their employer were more likely (55%) than those who received no such support (37%) to have volunteered in the past 12 months.

In addition to ESV, many other determinants can play a role in employee participation in volunteer activities.^{2,3} These include level of education, age, household income and the presence and age of children, which are recognized as especially important characteristics. The observations, in Table 1 of this fact sheet, confirm this conclusion when looking at employees aged 20 to 64 years.

For example, volunteering rates among individuals aged 20 to 64 years who are employed tend to increase with level of education, from 25% of those with no a high school diploma to 55% among individuals with a university degree. They also increase based on the household income quintile, from 37% for the bottom quintile to 55% for the top quintile. The rates also vary by sex and presence of children.

Employer support of volunteering is important regardless of employees' personal characteristics. In fact, employer support was associated with an increased probability of having volunteered for each of the employee sub-groups⁴ in Table 1. Moreover, when all characteristics in Table 1 are controlled in a multivariate regression analysis, employer support of volunteering remains a predictive factor of volunteer activity (results not shown).

2. Vézina, Mireille and Susan Crompton. 2012. "Volunteering in Canada." *Canadian Social Trends*. No. 93. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

3. Sinha, Meire. 2015. "Volunteering in Canada, 2004 to 2013", *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X2015003.

4. With the exception of women, with preschool-age children only, for which there is no statistical difference on participation with or without the presence of employer support.

Table 1

Volunteering rate by employer support of volunteering and certain sociodemographic characteristics, employees aged 20 to 64 years, 2013

	Volunteering rate (%)	Volunteering rate by employer support of volunteering	
		Yes (ref.**)	No
Employees aged 20 to 64 years	44	55	37**
Level of education			
No high school diploma	25*	34*	22 ^c
High school diploma	37*	49*	31**
Postsecondary diploma or certificate	41*	49*	38**
University degree (ref.)	55	65	46**
Age group			
20 to 24 years (ref.)	44	58	34**
25 to 34 years	40	50	36**
35 to 44 years	47	58	41**
45 to 54 years	46	56	39**
55 to 64 years	41	52	35**
Household income quintile			
Bottom quintile	37*	50*	32**
Second quintile	37*	50*	32**
Third quintile	40*	48*	36**
Fourth quintile	44*	53*	38**
Top quintile (ref.)	55	64	47**
Presence of children in the household			
No children	39*	51*	32**
Preschool-age children only	38*	47*	33**
Preschool- and school-age children (ref.)	55	63	50**
Sex			
Men (ref.)	41	52	36**
Women	46*	57	39**
Presence of children in the household			
No children			
Men (ref.)	37	46	33**
Women	42*	57*	32**
Preschool-age children only			
Men	37	52	29**
Women	38	43	37
Preschool- and school-age children			
Men	54*	64*	47**
Women	55*	62*	52**

^c use with caution

* significantly different from the reference category ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from the reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

Employer support for volunteering varies by industry

In 2013, 44% of Canadians aged 20 to 64 years who are employed reported having worked for an employer that offered some form of volunteering support. However, not all employees were as likely to receive such support. Factors that can vary from one industry to another include organizational culture, relevance of a brand image or of socially responsible behaviour, as well as the profile of recruited employees. Employer support of volunteering in the different industries also varied.

Table 2 shows the proportion of employees, by industry, who received some form of volunteering support from their employer, whether they participated in volunteer activities or not.

Manufacturing and construction were among the industries with the lowest proportions of employees who reported having received support from their employer (roughly one-third). At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of employees in finance and insurance, and public administration, who received volunteering support measures from their employer was evaluated at roughly double this (66% and 61% respectively).

Table 2

Employer support for volunteering and volunteering rates, by industry, employees aged 20 to 64 years, 2013

Industry	Employer support for volunteering	Volunteering rate
	percentage	
Finance and insurance	66*	58*
Public administration	61*	51*
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	59*	45
Arts, entertainment and recreation	55*	74*
Educational services	54*	66*
Information and cultural industries	53*	50*
Utilities	53*	56*
Other services (except public administration)	47*	54*
Real estate and rental and leasing	46 [†]	36 [†]
Professional, scientific and technical services	45*	41
Health care and social assistance	45*	43
Retail trade	44*	32
Wholesale trade	43	27
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	42 [‡]	47 [‡]
Accommodation and food services	41	34
Transportation and warehousing	38	39
Manufacturing	33	34
Construction (ref.)	31	36
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	27 [‡]	39
Management of companies and enterprises	F	F

[†] use with caution

F Too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from the reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

A positive correlation is observed between employer support of volunteering by industry and volunteering rates

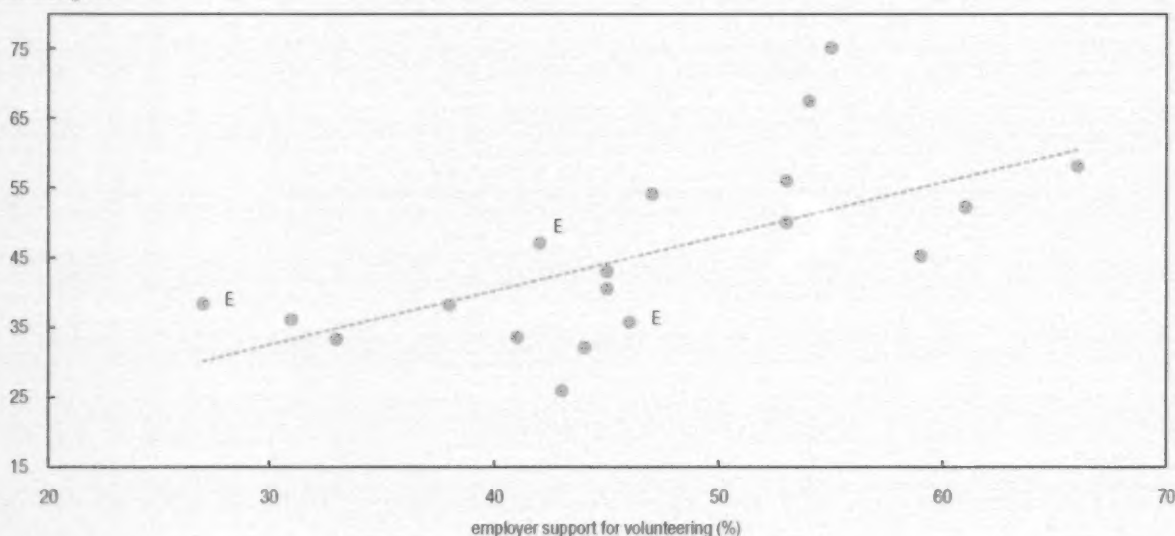
With employer support of volunteering varying from one industry to another, it could be assumed that volunteering rates are higher in the industries where this support is greatest. Chart 1 shows that there is indeed a positive correlation between employer support of volunteering in a given industry and the associated volunteering rates.

In several industries with significant employer support, employee volunteering rates are also relatively higher than average. For example, in the transportation and warehousing industry, the proportion of employees (38%) who receive some form of volunteering support from their employer is associated with a volunteering rate of 39%, compared with 53% and 50%, respectively, for the information and culture industry.

Chart 1

Employer support for volunteering and volunteering rates, by industry, employees aged 20 to 64 years, 2013

volunteering rate



¹ use with caution

Note: Estimations for the following industries should be used with caution: "Real estate, rental and leasing" (46%, 36%), "Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting" (42%, 47%), "Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services" (27%).

Source: Statistics Canada, 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

Managers are more likely to receive volunteering support from their employers

With regard to the occupational groups of Canadian employees, the 2013 GSS GVP data reveal conclusions similar to those observed for the industries; in this case, a range of types of support offered by the employer among the different occupational groups, as well as a positive correlation between volunteering support and the rate of participation in volunteer activities. Management, education, law, and social, community and government services are some of the occupational groups with higher rates of both employer-supported volunteering and participation in volunteer activities (Table 3).

The same holds true for the occupational groups characterized by a lower-than-average volunteering rate. The manufacturing and utilities group, as well as trades, transport, and equipment operators and related occupations are good examples, since the volunteering rates of 28% and 29% respectively are also associated with the lowest proportions of support of volunteering (31% and 34%).

Table 3

Employer support for volunteering and volunteering rate, by occupational group, employees aged 20 to 64 years, 2013

Occupational group	Employer support for volunteering	Volunteering rate
	percentage	
Management	57*	56*
Education, law, and social, community and government services	56*	62*
Natural resources, agriculture and related production	52 [†]	36 [†]
Business, finance and administration	50*	45*
Art, culture, recreation and sport	49*	61*
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	46*	48*
Sales and service	43*	36
Health	40	39
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	34	29
Manufacturing and utilities (ref.)	31	28

[†] use with caution* significantly different from the reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2013 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

Summary

This fact sheet confirms that participation in volunteer activities is higher when employees receive various forms of support of volunteering from their employer. It also provides an overview of the distribution of the types of employer support of volunteering by various job-market-related characteristics and for certain sociodemographic characteristics recognized as being determinants of volunteering.

Overall, a positive, yet moderate, correlation is observed between employer support of volunteering and volunteering rates. In this regard, this fact sheet highlights the exceptions and nuances to consider with respect to associations that may exist between volunteering and certain characteristics of employees and their jobs.

This fact sheet bring us one step closer to better understanding ESV. Other analyses on the number and different types of volunteering support offered in the workplace could shed further light on how ESV and participation in volunteer activities interact.

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